

Abstract

Bowlby's (1973) theory of adult attachment was used to provide a theoretical framework for the present study, which examined the relationship between adult attachment and depression. Social support, self-esteem, and optimism were proposed as potential mediating factors. Two competing models were designed and tested to investigate relationships among variables. Models were determined a priori based on theoretical and empirical literature. In the primary model, adult attachment was proposed to influence depression both directly and also indirectly through social support, self esteem and optimism. Alternately, in the second model, additional paths were added from social support and optimism to self esteem. Structural equation modeling was used to assess the fit of the two models to the data for the present study. Hypotheses of the study were that insecure attachment styles would correlate with negative outcomes, including dissatisfaction with social support, low self-esteem, pessimistic life orientation, and depressive symptoms. The hypothesized relationships among variables were supported by the data. Specifically, adult attachment directly influenced social support, self-esteem, and optimism; adult attachment indirectly influenced self-esteem through social support and optimism; finally, attachment, social support, and optimism indirectly influenced depression through self-esteem. In the discussion section, implications for theory and practice, methodological limitations, and directions for future research are provided. Results of the study conclude that attachment style has the potential to significantly influence many different areas of life functioning, including satisfaction with social support, self-esteem, levels of optimism, and depression.